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AUTHOR	Shreve, Chuck
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ABSTRACT

In an effort to determine success in retaining students through the successful completion of their educational goals, Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) conducted a study of student outcomes for fall 1994. The study focused on six measurements: fall 1993-94 retention, successful course completion, the effect of mid-semester progress reports sent to students, retention to goal attainment, Student Right to Know longitudinal retention rates, and a survey of 307 of 1,200 students who did not return after fall 1993. Study findings included the following: (1) NMC's full-time retention rate for fall 1993-94 was 55%; (2) fall 1994 students had a successful course completion rate of 81.3%; (3) the highest fall retention rate was in Health Occupations at 97.0%, while the lowest was in the Science and Math Division with 71.9%; (4) of the students notified at mid-semester that their performance was less than satisfactory, 42% were successful by the end of the semester; (5) retention rates by student goals were 72.7% for students whose goal was to advance in a job, 81.8% for those seeking to get a new job, 84.2% for those seeking transfer, and 85.6% for those reporting no goal; (6) for first-time, full-time students beginning in fall 1994, the retention rate through spring 1995 was 83.9%; (7) for non-returning students, 64% of respondents planned on returning the next semester, 17% were undecided, and 19% planned not to return; and (8) top reasons for not returning were conflict between job and college (43.3%), wanting a break (30.3%), unexpected expenses (24.5%), full-time work (24.1%), and family responsibilities (23.2%). (Contains six graphs/tables.) (KP)

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Northwestern Michigan College

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NMC Ends Report

RETENTION

July 1995

JC 950 462

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The background data for this report can be obtained from the Director of Enrollment Services - 922-1039.

NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE

REPORT ON INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
RETENTION
JULY 1995

Student Success and Retention Policy (Proposed).

Northwestern Michigan College is committed to student success and, to that end, will foster the development of a learning community characterized by positive attitudes, effective teaching and learning practices, and student support systems that attract students to NMC and enable them to remain at the college through achievement of their educational goals.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the retention report is to demonstrate NMC's performance in retaining students for the successful completion of their educational objectives. The data used in this report is a beginning of the research to develop standards for long term comparisons. There are six measurement areas included in this report:

1.) Fall 1993 to Fall 1994 retention
2.) Successful course completion
3.) Mid-semester progress report
4.) Retention to attainment of goals
5.) Student Right to Know retention rates (Required by Federal Law)
6.) Non-returning student survey report

1. FALL-TO-FALL RETENTION STARTING FALL 1993

Per the ACT Fall term 1994 Report, the average year-to-year retention rate for full-time (12 credits minimum) community college students across the nation is 56 percent. NMC's full-time retention rate for Fall 1993 to Fall 1994 was 55 percent. There are no appreciable differences between full-time males and females, ages, or deciding/disclosed majors. NMC students assigned an advisor had a higher retention rate when compared to those that did not have an advisor (57 percent compared to 49 percent.) There is also a higher retention rate for those students from Grand Traverse County compared to service area or state: 62 percent for Grand Traverse, 43 percent for service area and 55 percent for in-state.

Retention of Students Starting Fall 1993

	First Time Students			First-Time, Full-Time Students		
	Fall Term 93	Fall Semester 94	Retention Rate	Fall Term 93	Fall Semester 94	Retention Rate
First Time Students	1262	531	42%	----	----	----
Credit Hours						
Full time	674	370	55%	674	370	55%
6-11 credits	267	96	36%	----	----	----
1-5 credits	321	65	20%	----	----	----
Sex						
Female	684	288	42%	354	193	55%
Male	577	243	42%	320	177	55%
Assigned to Advisor						
Advisor	745	361	48%	501	286	57%
No Advisor	517	170	33%	173	84	49%
Residency						
Grand Traverse	561	258	46%	290	180	62%
Service Area	272	100	37%	171	74	43%
In State	403	161	40%	194	106	55%
Age						
start age ≤ 19	478	245	51%	344	203	59%
start age ≥ 20	784	286	36%	330	167	51%
Program of Study						
Deciding	357	126	35%	128	71	55%
Declared Program	905	405	45%	546	299	55%

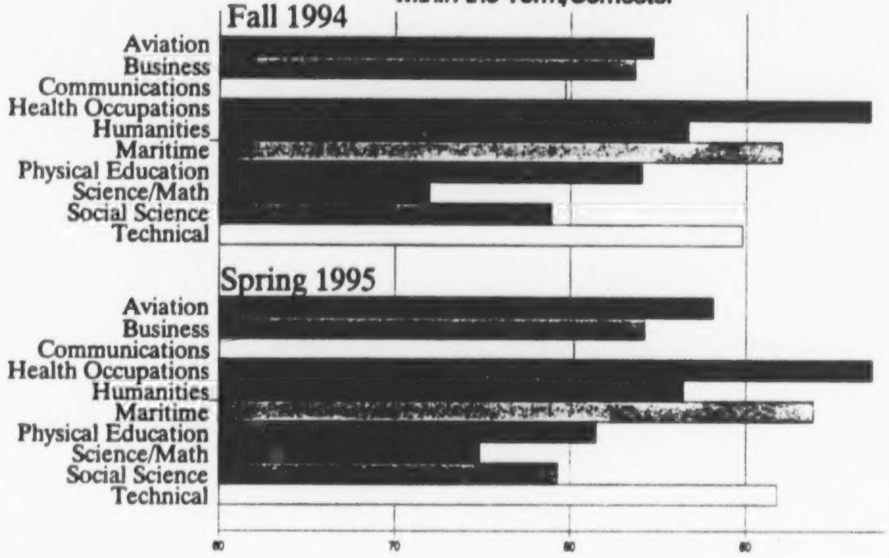
2. SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF COURSES

The purpose of compiling the percentage rates for successful completion of courses is to determine how successful students are in various departments of the college. The report was produced by Enrollment Services from grade distribution data for Fall 1994 and Spring 1995. Successful completers are those students that complete a course with a grade of S(successful), Q(qualified), 2.0 or better. The total number of completers does not include I(incomplete), AU(audit) or WP(withdraw passing).

The percentage of successful completion of NMC courses was 81.3 percent for Fall semester 1994 and 82.6 percent for Spring 1995. The highest retention rate for successful completion of courses was achieved through the Health Occupations Division with 97.0 percent for Fall 1994 and 97.1 percent for Spring 1995. The lowest was Science and Math Division with a 71.9 percent success rate for Fall 1994 and 74.8 percent for Spring 1995.

Percentage of Successful Completers

within the Term/Semester



3. MID-SEMESTER PROGRESS REPORT

The purpose of the mid-semester progress report is to assist students who are having academic difficulty to successfully complete the semester. During the seventh week of each semester, a grade report is sent to students taking 16-week classes indicating the courses in which they are having less than satisfactory performance. The Instructional Support Center sends a letter to those students who have two or more unsatisfactory marks encouraging them to obtain tutorial and counseling assistance to achieve academic success. Of those students that received a mid-semester unsuccessful mark, 42 percent of those grades were successful grades at the end of the semester. Successful grades include S(successful), Q(qualified) and those grades greater than or equal to 2.0. This program began Fall Semester 1994 with 872 students (22 percent of all enrolled) receiving unsatisfactory marks.

Mid-Semester Grades

Spring Semester 1995

4. RETENTION TO ATTAINMENT OF GOALS

The purpose of tracking first-time, full time NMC students for retention to attainment of goals is to determine whether students are maintaining enrollment through completion of their educational objectives. This new goal tracking system will allow NMC to determine whether their goals have been completed after two years. The goals listed by the 539 students in the cohort group beginning Fall 1994 included:

- Advance in job
- Get a new job
- Personal interest
- Transfer to another institution
- Undecided

Of those 539 students included in the Fall term 1994 cohort group;

- Eleven students listed "Advance in Job" as a goal Fall 1994 and eight returned in the Spring 1995 for a 72.7 percent retention rate.

- Eighty-eight students listed to "Get a New Job" Fall 1994 and 72 students were retained for Spring 1995 for an 81.8 percent retention rate.

- Two hundred forty-one students plan to transfer Fall 1994 with 203 retained (84.2 percent) for Spring 1995.

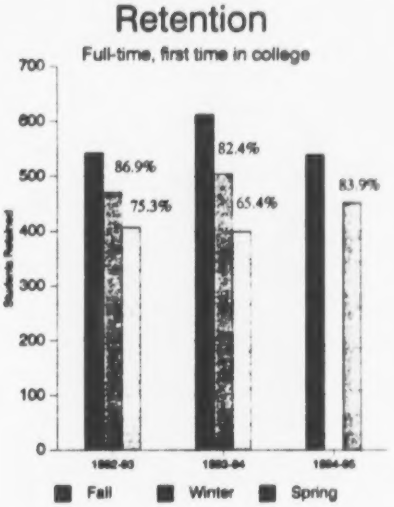
- One hundred ninety-five students listed no goal and, of those, 167 returned Spring 1995 for an 85.6 percent retention rate.

Retention to Attainment of Goals

Goal	Fall 1994 # of students	Spring 1995 # of students	Retention Rate
Advance in Job	11	8	72.7%
Get a New Job	88	72	81.8%
Plan to Transfer	241	203	84.2%
Undecided Goal	195	167	85.6%
Personal Interest	4	2	50.0%

5. STUDENT RIGHT TO KNOW RETENTION RATES

One purpose of the proposed federal Student Right to Know legislation is to track full time students from their initial enrollment to graduation and/or transfer. In completing this requirement, NMC has developed a retention data base for full-time students (12 or more credits) beginning Fall term 1992 and each Fall term and semester thereafter. This process assists NMC in determining the overall commitment students have to complete their goals.



The retention rate for the cohort group of first time, full-time students from Fall term 1992 to Winter 1993 was 86.9 percent and 75.3 percent for Spring 1993. The retention rate for the cohort group of 612 students for Fall 1993 to Winter 1994 was 82.4 percent and 65.4 percent for Spring 1994. A group of 539 students that began in the Fall Semester 1994 had a retention rate of 83.9 percent to Spring 1995.

6. NON-RETURNING STUDENT SURVEY REPORT

The non-returning student survey was conducted in March 1994 to identify reasons why NMC students who attended Fall term 1993 did not return Winter term 1994.

Methodology

The population in this survey consisted of students who did not return to NMC after fall term 1993. The sampling frame was made up of 1,200 students. To ensure 95 percent probability with a 5 percent margin of error, a sample of 290 was required. The list of names was shuffled twice using a random number assignment and sort. With an expected response rate of 75 percent, a systematic sampling obtained 375 names. The final sample consisted of 307 students from the 1200.

Results

The results of the survey indicated that 64 percent of these students planned on returning to NMC the next semester, following their one-semester leave, with 17 percent undecided and 19 percent not returning. Those questions that had 15 percent or more of the respondents selecting the major or minor category are listed by area, in rank order (highest percent to lowest).

Non-Returning Students

15% or more respondents selected these categories as a major or minor reason for leaving NMC

Personal	Academic	Institutional	Financial	Employment
Wanted a break (30.3%)	Inadequate study habits (22.8%)	Experience class scheduling problems (23.2%)	Tuition Fees were more than I could afford (25.1%)	Conflict between job and college (43.3%)
Family Responsibilities (23.2%)	Dissatisfied with my grades (17.3%)	Desired major was not offered (17%)	Encountered unexpected expenses (24.5%)	Accepted full time job (24.1%)
Health Problems (16.3%)	Disappointed with Quality of instruction (16%)			Wanted work experience (17.6%)
Decided to attend another college (15%)				

The highlighted items are possibilities for improvement through Quality Service Improvement teams.

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CONCLUSIONS

Fall to Fall

There is a higher retention rate for first time, full-time students assigned an advisor and/or counselor by almost 10 percent (57 percent to 49 percent) for Fall 1993 to Fall 1994. (page 1).

Successful Completers

The Health Occupations Division and the Maritime Academy have the highest rate of successful course completion; followed by the Technical and Humanities Divisions. The lowest success rates were Science/Math and Social Sciences areas. (page 2).

Mid-Semester Progress

Of those students who received a mid-semester unsuccessful mark, 42 percent of those grades were successful grades at the end of the semester. This is a new academic alert system and it will be monitored each semester for future success rates (page 3).

Goal Attainment

The highest retention rate for goal completion from Fall 1994 to Spring 1995 was the "Undecided" student with an 86.6 percent retention factor, "Plan to Get a New Job," 84.6 percent; "Plan to Transfer," 84.2 percent; and the lowest retention rate for "Advancement in Job," 72.7 percent. (page 4)

Student Right to Know

There is a consistent retention rate of 84 percent from Fall to Winter terms beginning Fall 1992. The new semester system is proving to be beneficial in that the retention rate of 83.9 percent from Fall to Spring indicates we have retained the student for the entire academic year, unlike the term system when we lost another 20 percent between Winter and Spring terms (pages 5).

Non-Returning Students

The non-returning student survey results indicate that NMC can improve several areas to increase retention, such as study skills, class schedule, cancelled class assistance, grades, tuition, and fees (page 5).

Prepared by Chuck Shreve
Graphics by Nancy McArthur

Retent12

Northwestern Michigan
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